

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 TRSE-00 DHA-02 IO-13 CIAE-00  
DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01  
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FEA-01 INT-05 CPR-01 SAB-02 STR-04 AGRE-00 IGA-02  
ABF-01 OPR-02 /109 W  
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P R 252209Z FEB 77  
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INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
AMEMBASSY PANAMA  
AMEMBASSY QUITO  
USSOUTHCOM  
AMCONSUL CALI POUCH  
AMCONSUL BARRANQUILLA POUCH  
AMCONSUL MEDELLIN POUCH

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E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, ECON  
SUBJ: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. SUMMARY. SPECIAL SESSION OF CONGRESS WILL OPEN MARCH 1, AND SHOULD

PROVIDE AN EXCELLENT PUBLIC FORUM FOR ALL ELEMENTS  
OF BOTH PARTIES TO CONTINUE THEIR VERBAL DUELS. THE REPORTED  
APPOINTMENT OF VIRGILIO BARCO AS AMBASSADOR TO THE U.S. COULD  
POSITION HIM AS A POSSIBLE COMPROMISE LIBERAL PARTY  
PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE. PRESIDENT LOPEZ CONTINUED HIS GOVERNMENT'S  
CLOSE RELATIONS WITH NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN NEIGHBORS THROUGH  
MEETINGS WITH THE ECUADOREAN JUNTA FEB 25, AND THE  
PANAMANIAN CHIEF OF GOVERNMENT LAST WEEKEND. CLERGY MEMBERS  
ALLEGEDLY CONNECTED WITH SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES HAVE BEEN  
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RELEASED, AND THEIR CHARGES OF MISTREATMENT ARE TO BE  
INVESTIGATED. TOUGH GOCMONETARY MEASURES HAVE HELD  
DOWN MONETARY GROWTH AND FROZEN DEVALUATION. OCCIDENTIAL  
OIL COMPANY BECAME THE FIRST MAJOR PETROLEUM FIRM TO ENTER  
COLOMBIA SINCE THE CHANGE LAST MAY IN THE PETROLEUM PRICING  
POLICY. END SUMMARY.

1. POLITICAL SITUATION LIKELY TO GET HOTTER. PRESIDENT LOPEZ, ON FEB 22, ISSUED THE LONG AWAITED DECREE CALLING FOR A SPECIAL SESSION OF CONGRESS FROM MARCH 1-24. THIS SESSION IS TO CONSIDER PROPOSED ELECTORAL REFORMS, AS WELL AS OTHER ITEMS DEEMED IMPORTANT BY THE PRESIDENT. THE SPECIAL SESSION SHOULD SEE AN INTENSIFICATION OF THE ALREADY HEATED POLITICAL BATTLES WITHIN BOTH THE LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE PARTIES. PRESIDENT LOPEZ, WHO WILL OPEN THE SESSION WITH A SPEECH ON MARCH 1, MAY USE THIS OCCASION TO CONTINUE HIS ON-GOING DUEL OF WORDS WITH LIBERAL PARTY PRESIDENTIAL CONTENDER CARLOS LLERAS AND HIS SUPPORTERS. WHILE THESE VERBAL BATTLES WILL NOT IMPERIL THE PASSAGE OF THE ELECTORAL REFORM BILL, THEY WILL FURTHER HARDEN DIVISIONS WITHIN THE PARTIES. MEANWHILE, LLERAS CONTINUED HIS VERBAL BARRAGE AGAINST PRESIDENT LOPEZ BY DEFENDING THE COORDINATOR OF THE LLERAS CAMPAIGN ORGANIZATION AGAINST VARIOUS CHARGES STEMMING FROM HIS CONFRONTATION WITH THE PRESIDENT LAST WEEK (BOGOTA 1623). LLERAS ALSO ANNOUNCED A MORE ACTIVE CAMPAIGN STANCE. HE WILL UNDERTAKE A SERIES OF POLITICAL TRIPS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY STARTING THIS WEEKEND.

2. BARCO AS AMBASSADOR TO U.S. BOGOTA PRESS OF FEB 24 AND 25 CARRIED FRONT PAGE ARTICLES ANNOUNCING THE APPOINTMENT BY THE GOC OF VIRGILIO BARCO, PROMINENT LIBERAL PARTY FIGURE, AS AMBASSADOR TO THE U.S., AS WELL AS THE GRANTING OF AGREEMENT BY THE USG. THE REPORTS FOLLOW BY TWO WEEKS BARCO'S ANNOUNCEMENT THAT HE HAD REMOVED HIMSELF FROM CONSIDERATION AS A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE-AT LEAST TEMPORARILY, AS HE HAS PRIVATELY POINTED OUT-AND THAT HE WOULD NOT SUPPORT EITHER OF THE TWO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PRINCIPAL CONTENDERS FOR THE PARTY'S PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION, JULIO CESAR TURBAY AND EX-PRESIDENT CARLOS LLERAS. IF THE REPORTS OF BARCO'S APPOINTMENT AS AMBASSADOR ARE TRUE, PRESIDENT LOPEZ MAY HAVE REACHED AN UNDERSTANDING WITH BARCO WHICH REMOVES HIM FROM THE EMBATTLED POLITICAL ARENA AND POSITIONS HIM IN A HIGHLY PRESTIGIOUS POST FROM WHICH BARCO COULD REENTER THE PICTURE AT A LATER DATE, AS A COMPROMISE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE WHO WOULD BE WIDELY ACCEPTED WITHIN THE LIBERAL PARTY AND WHO WOULD ENJOY THE TACIT SUPPORT OF LOPEZ.

3. TORRIJOS VISITS COLOMBIA AGAIN. PANAMANIAN CHIEF OF GOVERNMENT TORRIJOS MADE ANOTHER OF HIS SERIES OF SUDDEN UNANNOUNCED VISITS TO COLOMBIA, THIS TIME SPENDING TWO DAYS AT THE BARRANQUILLA CARNIVAL, WHICH WAS ALSO ATTENDED BY PRESIDENT LOPEZ. THE TWO LEADERS HELD PRIVATE TALKS, THE DETAILS OF WHICH WERE NOT RELEASED. IN STATEMENTS TO THE PRESS, TORRIJOS REPORTEDLY COMMENTED ON A "NEW PHASE" AND A "NEW APPROACH" IN THE CANAL NEGOTIATIONS, BUT PROVIDED NO DETAILS. HE ALSO WAS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT THE U.S. WAS

POLITICALLY INCLINED TO CONCLUDE A TREATY.

4. PRESIDENT LOPEZ TO MEET WITH ECUADOREAN JUNTA. PRESIDENT LOPEZ MET WITH THE ECUADOREAN JUNTA ON THE BORDER WITH ECUADOR ON FEB 25. THEIR TALKS ARE EXPECTED TO FOCUS ON COMMERCIAL QUESTIONS, INCLUDING THE ANDEAN PACT, THE LATIN AMERICAN FREE TRADE ASSOCIATION, AND COLOMBIAN IMPORTATION OF ECUADOREAN PETROLEUM.

5. ALLEGED SUBVERSIVE CLERGY MEMBERS PROVISIONALLY RELEASED.

THREE COLOMBIAN PRIESTS AND AN AUSTRIAN NUN, HELD SINCE LAST NOVEMBER AT THE NAVAL BASE IN CARTAGENA FOLLOWING THEIR ARREST ON CHARGES OF SUBVERSION (76BOGOTA 11440), WERE TURNED OVER TO CHURCH AUTHORITIES BY A CIVILIAN COURT PENDING THEIR TRIAL. THIS FOLLOWED A SUPERIOR COURT RULING THAT UNDER THE CONCORDAT THEIR CASE DID NOT FALL UNDER MILITARY JURISDICTION. THE SUPERIOR COURT ALSO ORDERED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE PRISONERS' CHARGES THAT THEY HAD BEEN MISTREATED BY THE MILITARY AUTHORITIES.

6. MONETARY AND EXCHANGE POLICES. TOUGH MONETARY MEASURES ADOPTED BY THE GOC SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR HAVE HELD MONETARY GROWTH TO MINUS .7 PERCENT IN SPITE OF OVER \$100 MILLION GROWTH OF RESERVES. THE RATE OF DEVALUATION HAS ALSO REMAINED FROZEN SINCE THE FIRST OF JANUARY. THE PESO REACHED 36.43 AT THE END OF JANUARY BUT WAS REVALUED TO 36.38 WHERE IT HAS REMAINED. THE FREEZE IS ANOTHER ANTI-INFLATIONARY MEASURE WHICH THE MINISTER OF FINANCE SAYS HE WILL NOT CHANGE IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE. IN THE MEANTIME, THE BANKERS ASSOCIATION AND OTHER OBSERVERS HAVE EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT A FIXED EXCHANGE RATE WITH 25 TO 30 PERCENT INFLATION WILL ADVERSELY AFFECT NON-COFFEE EXPORTS, AND THE ASSOCIATION OF FINANCE INSTITUTIONS HAS RECOMMENDED THE ADOPTION OF A DUAL EXCHANGE SYSTEM.

7. OCCIDENTAL SIGNS ASSOCIATION CONTRACT. OCCIDENTAL OIL COMPANY SIGNED AN ASSOCIATION CONTRACT WITH ECOPETROL, THE STATE OWNED PETROLEUM COMPANY TO CONDUCT PETROLEUM EXPLORATION IN THE MIDDLE MAGDALENA REGION. OCCIDENTAL IS THE FIRST PETROLEUM MAJOR TO ENTER COLOMBIA IN A NEW ASSOCIATION AGREEMENT SINCE THE PETROLEUM PRICING POLICY WAS CHANGED LAST MAY. ISLAND CREEK COAL, A 100 PERCENT OWNED OCCIDENTAL SUBSIDIARY, HELD MEETINGS THIS WEEK WITH PRESIDENT LOPEZ AND OTHER HIGH LEVEL OFFICIALS AS A PRELIMINARY STEP IN POSSIBLE COAL EXPLORATION AND DEVELOPMENT.  
SANCHEZ

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## Message Attributes

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